HOSEA 10

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Retribution for Israel's Sin	Israel's Sin and Captivity	Israel has rejected the LORD and must undergo punishment that will bring loss of king, children, places of worship, and country (9:1-11:12)	The Prophet Speaks About Israel (9:17-10:2)	The Destruction of Israel's Cultic Objects
10:1-2 (1-2)	10:1-2 (1-2)	10:1-2 (1-2)		10:1-10 (1-8)
10:3-10 (3-10)	10:3-8 (3-6)	10:3-10 (3-6)	10:3-4	
			10:5-8	
	(7-8)	(7-8)	The Lord Pronounces Judgment on Israel	
	10:9-11 (9-11)	(9-10)	10:9-10	(9-10)
				Israel Has Disappointed Yahweh's Hope
10:11-15 (11-15)		10:11-12 (11-12)	10:11-13a	10:11-15 (11)
	10:12-15 (12)			(12)
	(13-15)	10:13-15 (13-15)	10:13b-15	(13-15)

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 10:1-2

[1]Israel is a luxuriant vine;
He produces fruit for himself.
The more his fruit,
The more altars he made;
The richer his land,
The better he made the *sacred* pillars.
[2]Their heart is faithless;
Now they must bear their guilt.
The Lord will break down their altars
***And* destroy their *sacred* pillars.**

10:1

NASB, NRSV, NJB	**"Israel is a luxuriant vine"**
NKJV	**"Israel empties *his* vine"**
TEV	**"The people of Israel were like a grapevine that was full of grapes"**
JPSOA	**"Israel is a ravaged vine"**

"Luxuriant" (BDB 132 I, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is found only here. The Septuagint has "a vine with beautiful branches." This seems to be an allusion to 9:10 (cf. Ps. 80:8-13). God made Israel fruitful (this is one possible meaning of *bqq*). However, the more YHWH blessed them, the more they went after the Ba'als (cf. Hos. 11:1). What irony! The vine was often a symbol for Israel (e.g., Deut. 32:32; Ps. 80:8-19; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15:1-8).

It is possible to take the VERB as "empty" (BDB 132 II) and thereby Israel as a vine that does not produce God's desired fruit (cf. Hos. 9:10-17, JPSOA).

▣ **"He produces fruit for himself"** The rest of this verse is an allusion to Hos. 8:11 (cf. BDB 915) or 12:11 (cf. Jer. 2:28; 11:13).

▣

NASB	**"The better he made the *sacred* pillars"**
NKJV	**"They have embellished *his* sacred pillars"**
NRSV	**"He improved his pillars"**
TEV	**"The more beautiful they made the sacred pillars they worship"**
NJB	**"The richer he made the sacred pillars"**

NET Bible	**"They adorned the fertility pillars"**
JPSOA	**"cult pillars abounded"**

Prosperity did not turn their hearts back to God (as it was intended, cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29), but magnified their worship and thanksgiving to Ba'al. They improved his worship sites and neglected YHWH's temple!

10:2 "heart" In Hebrew thought the heart, not the emotions, is the center of the will and the intellect.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

▣

NASB	**"faithless"**
NKJV, NJB, LXX	**"divided"**
NRSV, REB	**"false"**
TEV	**"deceitful"**
Peshitta	**"wavering"**

The Hebrew term (BDB 325 II, KB 322, *Qal* PERFECT) is "smooth." It is a metaphor of insecure footing, therefore, interpreted as treacherous or unreliable (cf. New Berkeley version "Their heart was slippery"). This is the only place in the OT where this VERB is used of a "heart." Usually it refers to a tongue. This faithlessness can refer to

1. Ba'al vs. YHWH
2. trust in the God of Israel vs. political alliances with Egypt and/or Assyria

The opposite metaphor of sure footedness is the source of the OT term for faith (cf. BDB 52-54).

It is possible to take the VERB as "divided" (BDB 324) meaning their devotion (i.e., heart) was split between YHWH and Ba'al. However, this VERB is used mostly in Chronicles and not the prophets.

▣ **"they must bear their guilt"** See Hos. 4:15; 5:15; 13:1,16; Micah 5:10-15).

▣ **"their altars. . .their *sacred* pillars"** These objects of worship are often associated with the idolatrous fertility practices of Ba'al (uplifted stone pillar, i.e., phallic symbol, cf. Hos. 3:4; 1 Kgs. 14:23-24) and Asherah (raised, cut stone altar with a place for a carved stake or live tree).

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL'S MANDATED RESPONSE TO CANAANITE FERTILITY WORSHIP

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 10:3-10

[3]Surely now they will say, "We have no king,
For we do not revere the LORD.
As for the king, what can he do for us?"
[4]They speak *mere* words,
With worthless oaths they make covenants;
And judgment sprouts like poisonous weeds in the furrows of the field.
[5]The inhabitants of Samaria will fear
For the calf of Beth-aven.
Indeed, its people will mourn for it,

And its idolatrous priests will cry out over it,
Over its glory, since it has departed from it.
[6]The thing itself will be carried to Assyria
As tribute to King Jareb;
Ephraim will be seized with shame
And Israel will be ashamed of its own counsel.
[7]Samaria will be cut off *with* her king
Like a stick on the surface of the water.
[8]Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed;
Thorn and thistle will grow on their altars;
Then they will say to the mountains,
"Cover us!" And to the hills, "Fall on us!"
[9]From the days of Gibeah you have sinned, O Israel;
There they stand!
Will not the battle against the sons of iniquity overtake them in Gibeah?
[10]When it is My desire, I will chastise them;
And the peoples will be gathered against them
When they are bound for their double guilt.

10:3 "We have no king" This may reflect 1 Sam. 8:4-9. Hosea often speaks against the northern monarchy (cf. Hos. 7:3-7; 8:4, 10, 13; 13:9-11). The original dynasty (Jeroboam I) did not last. There were numerous changes in leadership (i.e., king).

10:4 "They speak *mere* words, With worthless oaths they make covenants" This is a COGNATE ACCUSATIVE, emphasizing that they speak (BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT) human words with no meaning (cf. Isa. 58:13). This contrasted their oaths/covenant to YHWH (cf. Exod. 19-20) with their oaths/covenants to foreign powers. Israel's oaths cannot be trusted. They are based solely on self interest.

The second line of poetry has two INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES. This construction draws attention to this second line and not the VERB of line one.

For "worthless" see SPECIAL TOPIC: EMPTY, VAIN, FALSE, NOTHINGNESS

▣ **"judgment sprouts like poisonous weeds"** This bitter and poisonous weed (BDB 912 II) is used of

1. idolatry – Deut. 29:18; 32:32; Jer. 9:15; 23:15
2. siege trauma – Jer. 8:14; Lam. 3:5,19
3. legal injustice – here, Amos 6:12

10:5 "Samaria" Samaria, the mountain ridge fortress, was built by Omri (cf. 1 Kgs. 16:24) and became Israel's capital. After 922 B.C., when the kingdom split, the Northern Ten Tribes under Jeroboam I were known as Israel, Ephraim, or Samaria, and the Southern two tribes, under Rehoboam, Solomon's son, were known as Judah.

▣

NASB	**"will fear"**
NKJV, JPSOA	**"fear"**
NRSV, NJB, REB	**"tremble"**

TEV	**"will be afraid"**
NET Bible	**"will lament"**
LXX	**"dwell near"**
Peshitta	**"sojourn"**

The Hebrew VERB (BDB 158 III, KB 185, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means "to dread." This VERB can mean "reverential respect" (i.e., worship) or "fear" (i.e., it being taken away, cf. Hos. 10:5-6). Many scholars suppose an emendation based on the parallelism "to lament" (BDB 626, #2,a).

▣ **"the calf of Beth-aven"** This refers to the golden calf that Jeroboam I set up at Bethel (cf. Hos. 4:15; 5:8; 1 Kgs. 16:28-29). The golden calves (Bethel and Dan) were not meant to be idols, but representatives of YHWH (cf. Exod. 32:4-5). The term Beth-aven (BDB 110), which is translated "house of vanity," is a word play on Bethel ("house of God"). This is an example of Jews corrupting a name (god or place) because of its association with idolatry.

▣

NASB, NRSV	**"idolatrous priests"**
NKJV, REB, Peshitta	**"its priests"**
TEV	**"the priests who serve the idol"**
NJB	**"its idol-priests"**
JPSOA	**"priestlings"**
LXX	**"his people"**

This refers to the priests at the royal sites of Bethel and Dan being labeled as Ba'al's priests (cf. 2 Kgs. 23:5; Zeph. 1:4).

These Hebrew CONSONANTS *kmr* have several meanings.

1. to be warm (or blackened) BDB I
2. to be black (from Syriac) BDB II
3. to lay prostrate, BDB III
4. a snare or net

These CONSONANTS are the regular term for "priests" in Canaanite and Akkadian languages. These priests of the north were seen by Hosea as foreign priests!

▣

NASB	**"cry out over it"**
NKJV	**"shriek for it"**
NRSV	**"wail over it"**
NRSV footnote	**"exult" (Hebrew)**
TEV	**"will weep over it"**
NJB	**"they exult in its glory"**
REB	**"lament"**
Peshitta	**"rejoice"**

The MT has "will rejoice" (BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT), but it may be used

1. as sarcasm
2. it needs to be altered to "wail" (NET, p. 1571, #6, cf. Hos. 7:14)

▣ **"its glory"** This term (BDB 458 II) is usually used of YHWH (cf. 1 Sam. 4:21-22), but here it is used in a sarcastic sense of a calf-idol that originally was meant to represent YHWH, but had long since come to represent Ba'al.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (*kabod*)

10:6

NASB, NRSV	**"the thing itself"**
NKJV, TEV, Peshitta	**"*The idol*"**
NJB, REB, JPSOA	**"it"**
LXX	**"him"**

The ANTECEDENT is probably the golden calf worshiped at Beth-aven. It will be carried off as booty to Assyria.

▣ **"King Jareb"** This is a reference to Tiglath-pileser III. It is literally a metaphor meaning "the Great King," literally "a king that contends" (BDB 937, cf. Hos. 5:13).

▣ **"Israel will be ashamed of its own counsel"** The VERB (BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used also in Hos. 2:5 and 4:19. Idolatry (JPSOA) made them "ashamed."

Their faulty counsel (BDB 420) was mentioned earlier in Hos. 7:12 (cf. Jer. 7:24). There have been several other suggested options for "counsel."

1. its disobedience
2. its wooden idol (cf. Hos. 10:5)

The NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, and NET have "wooden idol."

10:7 "Samaria will be cut off *with* her king" The VERB (BDB 198, KB 225, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) means to remove, to destroy (cf. Hos. 10:8). YHWH allowed a northern king because of the arrogance of Rehoboam, but he did evil in His sight by setting up the golden calves. Now He will remove him in His wrath (cf. Hos. 13:11).

▣

NASB	**"Like a stick on the surface of the water"**
NKJV	**"Like a twig on the water"**
NRSV, TEV, Peshitta	**"Like a chip on the face of the waters"**
NJB	**"Like a straw drifting on the water"**
REB	**"Like flotsam on water"**
JPSOA	**"Like foam upon water"**
LXX	**"Like fire wood upon the face of the water"**

The Hebrew here is very difficult; the term occurs only here in the OT. It can refer to a piece (twig or splinter) of wood (BDB 893 II, cf. Joel 1:7 for a similar root) or "foam" (Vulgate, REB, JPSOA).

10:8 "the high places of Aven" Aven means "vanity" or "nothingness" (BDB 19). This term is often applied by the Jews as a word play to corrupt place names and the names of people who were involved in idolatry.

The "high places" can refer to

1. the top of hills (i.e., threshing floors)
2. the raised, cut stone altars of local Ba'al shrines (cf. Hos. 4:13)

▣ **"Thorn and thistle will grow on their altars"** This may be a reference to a curse (cf. Gen. 3:18) or a sign of non-use (cf. Hos. 9:6).

▣ **"say to the mountains,**

'Cover us!' And to the hills 'Fall on us'" The first VERB (BDB 491, KB 487) is a *Piel* IMPERATIVE. The second VERB (BDB 656, KB 709) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This is used in Luke 23:30 and Rev. 6:16 as an expression of the horror at God's judgment. Here there may be a theologicl connection between "mountains" and "hills" and Ba'al worship.

10:9 "From the days of Gibeah you have sinned" This could be another anti-monarchial statement because this was Saul's hometown and the site of his first sin against God (cf. 1 Sam. 13:8-14). It could also be a reference to the sins recorded in Judges 19-21.

▣ **"When it is My desire"** This phrase (BDB 16) has no VERB. It seems to be a way to express God's will (i.e., judgment).

Hosea, the second writing prophet, depicts God in very emotional (anthropomorphic) metaphors.

1. wild beast, Hos. 5:14; 13:7,8
2. hate, Hos. 9:15
3. strong desire to judge, Hos. 10:10
4. anger, Hos. 11:9; 13:11

Human language describing God is always metaphorical and analogical. Humans are sinful, temporal, and restricted to this planet. Our vocabulary and mental ability cannot fathom an eternal, holy, personal being!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE

▣ **"I will chastise them"** The VERB (BDB 415, KB 418, *Qal* IMPERFECT) generally means "educate" or "inform" (morally) by discipline. Here it refers to discipline (i.e., judgment) because of covenant violations.

10:10 "the peoples will be gathered" God will gather (BDB 62, KB 74, *Pual* PERFECT with *waw*) the nations (BDB 766) to judge His people.

▣ **"they are bound"** This binding (BDB 63, KB 75, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) was historically done by both Assyria and later Babylon as they tied the exiles together to deport them to a foreign land.

Notice the sound play between

1. gather – BDB 62, KB 74
2. bind – BDB 63, KB 75

▣ **"double guilt"** Literally this is "two of their iniquities" (*Qere*). The phrase "double guilt" comes from the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Vulgate. It could refer to

1. a play on the name Ephraim ("double fruitful")
2. the two sins of following Ba'al and forsaking YHWH (cf. Jer. 2:13)
3. the golden calves set up at Bethel and Dan

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 10:11-15

[11]Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh,
But I will come over her fair neck *with a yoke*;
I will harness Ephraim,
Judah will plow, Jacob will harrow for himself.
[12]Sow with a view to righteousness,
Reap in accordance with kindness;
Break up your fallow ground,
For it is time to seek the LORD
Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.
[13]You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice,
You have eaten the fruit of lies.

Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors,
14Therefore a tumult will arise among your people,
And all your fortresses will be destroyed,
As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle,
***When* mothers were dashed in pieces with *their* children.**
15Thus it will be done to you at Bethel because of your great wickedness.
At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off.

10:11 "Ephraim is a trained heifer that loves to thresh" This poetic line refers to the easier task of threshing out the grain. The following lines prophesy that she will be made to do the difficult work of plowing (i.e., yoke on her neck).

10:11b	
NASB	**"But I will come over her fair neck *with a yoke*"**
NKJV	**"But I harnessed her fair neck"**
NRSV	**"and I spared her fair neck"**
TEV	**"But I decided to put a yoke on her beautiful neck"**
NJB, REB	**"But I have laid a yoke on her fine neck"**
JPSOA	**"I place a yoke upon her sleek neck"**
LXX	**"So I shall come against the fairest part of her neck"**
Peshitta	**"but I bent her neck under the yoke"**

The MT has the VERB "passed over" (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PERFECT). The UBS Text Project, p. 254, gives it an "A" rating.

The NJB, REB, JPSOA, follow the LXX.

The MT has "fair thing" (BDB 375) but this should be emended to "yoke" (BDB 760, cf. Hos. 11:4).

10:11c,d There are three separate VERBS in these lines of poetry for preparing the soil for seed. God's people had sown wickedness (cf. v. 13) but He hopes they will plow righteousness and kindness (v. 12a,b).

1. harness, v. 11c – BDB 938, KB 1230, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (in this sense, only here; VERB lit. "to mount" or "to ride")
2. plow, v. 11d – BDB 360 I, KB 367, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. harrow, v. 11d – BDB 961, KB 1306, *Piel* IMPERFECT

The JPSOA asserts that

1. #1 refers to Ephraim doing the advanced plowing, from Arabic VERB
2. #2 refers to Judah doing the main plowing
3. #3 refers to Jacob/Israel as a whole doing the final plowing

▣ **"Judah will plow"** This refers to

1. positive – YHWH's covenant blessing (v. 12)
2. negative – a future series of Babylonian exiles (vv. 13-14, i.e., 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.).

10:12 "Sow with a view to righteousness,
Reap in accordance with kindness" What a surprising verse in this judgment context. There are three *Qal* IMPERATIVES (sow, reap, till [break]). This VERB seems to be an appeal by the prophet (or God Himself) for the people to return to God (cf. Prov. 11:18). These first three poetic lines state a universal truth, "whatsoever we sow, that shall we reap" (cf. Hos. 8:7; 12:2; Job 4:8; Ps. 126:6; Prov. 11:18; 22:8; Jer. 4:3; 2 Cor. 9:6 Gal. 6:7).

The term "kindness" (BDB 338) is the Hebrew term *hesed*, which means "covenant loyalty," both toward God and one's covenant partners (cf. Hos. 4:1; 6:4-6; 12:7; Micah 6:8).

▣

NASB	**"in accordance with kindness"**
NKJV	**"in mercy"**
NRSV	**"steadfast love"**
TEV	**"the blessings"**
NJB	**"a harvest of faithful love"**
REB	**"loyalty"**
JPSOA	**"the fruits of goodness"**
LXX	**"unto the fruit of life"**
Peshitta	**"a harvest of mercy"**

The MT has "according to Hesed" (see SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS). The LXX, JPSOA follow an emendation (cf. v. 13b).

1. לפי – חסד according to the love
2. לפרי – חסד – for the fruit of love

The UBS Text Project, p. 254, gives the MT (#1) a "B" rating (some doubt).

▣ **"Break up your fallow ground"** This is a metaphor of repentance (cf. Jer. 4:3).

▣ **"For it is time to seek the LORD"** The VERB (BDB 205, KB 233) is a *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT. It has a covenant connotation (e.g., Deut. 4:29). YHWH can be found if people truly seek Him (e.g., Jer. 29:13). Seeking YHWH is sinful Israel's only hope of avoiding destruction (cf. Hos. 10:12; Isa. 55:6-7; Amos 5:4,6). The proper time to seek the Lord is now!

▣ **"Until He comes to rain righteousness on you"** This is a surprising agricultural metaphor (i.e., annual and regular rainfall) for spiritual reality (i.e., righteousness). This is a recurrent theme in the prophets (e.g., Hos. 2:19-20; 6:3; 14:5; Ps. 72:6-7; Isa. 44:3-4; 45:8; Joel 2:23; 3:18).

The JPSOA translation has "so that you may obtain a teacher of righteousness." This is a title in the DSS of the coming Messiah. No other English translation follows this emendation.

10:13 "You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice" God's desire for a "righteous" and "loyal" people (Hos. 10:12), using an agricultural metaphor ("break up fallow ground"), has unfortunately resulted in exactly the opposite fruit—wickedness and injustice.

They have "trusted" (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT) in their own power instead of YHWH's. the result (Hos. 10:14-15) is violent destruction!

▣ **"Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors"** The historical setting was a time of great prosperity and military victory (see Introduction). Israel (like Judah, 8:14) was trusting in her military power (cf. Jer. 9:23-24).

The phrase "your way" (BDB 202, Peshitta) is translated "chariots" (cf. Hos. 14:3) in the Septuagint, which makes for good parallelism, but requires an emendation (i.e., dropping of one CONSONANT). It may be possible to read the consonants from a Ugaritic root as "power."

10:14 "As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel" This is possibly a reference to

1. Shalmaneser III who reigned from 858-824 B.C. He is referred to in the Bible in 2 Kgs. 17:3 and 18:9.
2. Salamanu, King of Moab, who was a contemporary with Tiglath-pileser III. Beth-arbel is an unknown site and the exact historical reference is uncertain.
3. Shallum, son of Jabesh who killed Zechariah, King of Israel, 2 Kgs. 15:8-16 (JPSOA footnote)

▣ **"mothers were dashed in pieces with *their* children"** This was a gruesome aspect of Assyrian exile. The army killed all of the very old and very young who could not travel into exile. This, of course, included pregnant women. This was done to shock and traumatize the population (cf. Hos. 13:16).

10:15	
NASB, NRSV, NJB, JPSOA	**"at dawn"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"in a morning"**
TEV	**"as the battle begins"**
RSV	**"in the storm"**

The MT has "at dawn" (BDB 1007), which the UBS Text Project, p. 255, gives a "B" rating. The RSV translation requires an emendation.

1. בשׁחר – at dawn
2. בשׁער – in the storm

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 9 AND 10

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the references to fertility worship in Hosea 9 and 10.
2. List the cities that are referred to in Hos. 9:9-10:15.
3. Will Israel be exiled to Egypt or Assyria? Explain Hos. 11:5 compared to 7:10; 8:13; 9:3.
4. Explain the Hebrew's use of "shame."

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